United Nations A/C.3/57/SR.10

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
6 February 2003
English
Original: French

Third Committee

Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 8 October 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Wenaweser ..... (Liechtenstein)

Contents

Agenda item 97: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)

Agenda item 98: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*)

Agenda item 99: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

02-62730 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 97: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly *(continued)* (A/57/115)

Agenda item 98: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family *(continued)* (A/57/3, A/57/139 and Corr.1, A/57/352, A/57/67-E/2002/45, A/57/218 and Corr.1; A/C.3/57/L.6 and E/CN.5/2002/2)

Agenda item 99: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing *(continued)* (A/57/93)

1. **Mr. Abel** (Myanmar), speaking on agenda item 99, associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and expressed appreciation for the concise report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/57/93).

2. Unlike the first World Assembly on Ageing and the 1982 Vienna International Plan of Action, the Second World Assembly on Ageing and the Madrid Plan of Action adopted there focused on the consequences of ageing societies in developing countries and on the challenges and opportunities associated with that phenomenon in the twenty-first century and in the context of development. His delegation welcomed that approach.

3. The Madrid Plan of Action stressed the need to mainstream ageing, which the Secretary-General had termed a "silent revolution" and a force with an importance comparable to that of globalization, into the global development agenda. His own Government had also focused on that need in its national development plan.

4. Sixty per cent of the world's population and a large portion of its ageing population lived in the Asia-Pacific region. In Asia, although families were the primary care providers for older persons, additional assistance was usually a State-imposed requirement. Such care did not pose a serious problem in Myanmar; for religious, cultural and social reasons, older persons were highly respected and almost always lived either with their families or in State-subsidized homes run by religious and voluntary organizations. In addition, retirees were entitled to benefits and pensions; however, they continued to offer their skill and expertise through involvement in civil society, voluntary organizations and commerce.

5. His delegation firmly believed that the Committee would help to sensitize the international community to the goals embodied in the Madrid Plan of Action.

6. **Mr. Alabi** (Nigeria), speaking on agenda items 97 and 99, associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Consideration of agenda items 97 and 99 provided an opportunity to review progress in implementing the Millennium Declaration in the context of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, which had stressed the need for coordinated action to address the problems of social inequality and exclusion, unemployment, poverty and other development constraints.

7. As a developing country, Nigeria recognized the significance of education in promoting social development, eradicating poverty and creating a healthy society. The theme of the Economic and Social Council's high-level segment at its 2002 session, "The contribution of human resources development, including in the areas of health and education, to the process of development", affirmed the importance of health and education as key factors for development. Nigeria had recorded some modest achievements through nationwide implementation of its Universal Basic Education Programme, which provided free, compulsory education for all children from age five onwards as a basis for social development.

8. His Government recognized the key role of the family in the development of society, as affirmed by President Olusegun Obasanjo in his broadcast commemorating the forty-second anniversary of Nigeria's independence. His delegation therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's call for Governments to establish social security systems to give families access to basic social services. His Government had established a national health insurance scheme and planned to set up a comprehensive social security system for families. Nigeria was also involved in preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004, which would

draw international attention to the role of families and the challenges that faced them in a globalized world.

9. It was regrettable that little progress had been made in alleviating poverty, and globalization had exacerbated social inequalities. Despite the identification of priorities in the Millennium Declaration and the commitments entered into under the Monterrey Consensus, development was compromised by the grossly inadequate financing of programmes. The establishment of the Office of the High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States gave hope that more efficient strategies would be devised for the States in question. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that only the necessary political will would make it possible to achieve the millennium development goals.

10. Nigeria, determined to improve the quality of life of all its citizens, as demonstrated by its active participation in the Second World Assembly on Ageing in April 2002, endorsed the Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, and remained committed to taking effective measures to implement them. Various policies had already been put in place to address the welfare of older persons and their integration into socio-economic development.

11. His Government paid serious attention to the rights of persons with disabilities and welcomed the work done by the Ad Hoc Committee on a comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/168. The implementation of the millennium development goals must therefore take into account the rights of the disabled and their participation in socio-economic activities. To that end, the Government was carrying out national plans and specific measures to ensure equal access for the disabled to social services, including training, rehabilitation and employment.

12. Another group of people of vital importance to Nigeria were young people, who were participating actively in community development through workshops, seminars and organized youth programmes. The development of young people was central to the policies and actions of the Government at all levels, in keeping with Nigeria's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

13. The promotion of social development required a genuine partnership between Member States and the international community. It was therefore essential for the United Nations and all stakeholders to take the necessary measures to follow up the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, and, in cooperation with donor countries, non-governmental organizations and other bodies involved, to implement the decisions taken under the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development and five-year review of the Summit and the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development. Nigeria would cooperate with other countries committed to achieving the noble objective of social development and implementing the millennium development goals.

14. **Ms. Arslandoğan** (Turkey), speaking on agenda item 98 as a youth representative of Turkey, said that almost half the population of her country was under the age of 18; society should give more responsibilities to the young so that they could contribute more to the development of their societies. Education within the family and in society was becoming more and more important for their future.

15. After noting the definition of a child contained in article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, she said that young persons were human beings involved in a society, who read, listened to others, spoke, thought, more importantly, reacted. In her view youth was not necessarily measured by age but rather by intellectual activities. Any social development strategy aimed at youth should therefore take into consideration factors such as the family, peers, school environment, and level of education.

16. When devising global social development strategies, it should be borne in mind that every country had its own cultural, social and ethical values, and that tolerance had to be exercised and diversity respected. As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone was entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration could be fully realized. The young people of the day, who were the leaders of the future, wanted nothing more than to shoulder their

responsibility for a more peaceful, democratic, tolerant and prosperous world.

17. **Ms. G/Meskel** (Ethiopia), speaking on agenda item 98, endorsed the statement by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

18. Ethiopia attached great importance to the successful implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, which had culminated in the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action, aimed at eradicating poverty, achieving full employment and fostering a just society. Her delegation was convinced that social development, which must be centred on people, presupposed the simultaneous implementation of decisions taken at meetings such as the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, the Fourth World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference held in Doha, the Monterrey Consensus and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

19. Poverty was the greatest challenge of the time and a danger that Ethiopia was committed to eradicating. The identification of the root causes of poverty was fundamental to the advancement of social development goals, and her Government therefore made food security, primary education, basic health-care services and job creation high priorities. The development strategy it had adopted focused on rural areas and on small farmers, while paying due attention to the private sector.

20. With regard to health, despite the emphasis on prevention, the provision of basic social services and its concerted efforts in that regard, Ethiopia was among the countries with the fewest social services. In addition the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis were seriously affecting the active population. To combat those scourges, his Government advocated good governance, the promotion of human rights and the elimination of all forms of discrimination, and it encouraged partnership with civil society.

21. Globalization was both a challenge, because it compromised social development, and an opportunity, provided that benefits could be shared equitably. That was far from being the case in the developing countries, and globalization therefore had to be collectively managed.

22. The primary responsibility for social development rested with States, but that in no way precluded the significant role of the international community. She reiterated her Government's commitment to promoting social development while calling on all stakeholders and the international community at large.

23. **Ms. Gordon** (Haiti), having associated herself with the statement made by the representative of Saint Lucia on behalf of countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), of which Haiti was a member, recalled the main themes of the World Summit for Social Development, which were high on her Government's social development agenda. However, the social, political and economic tensions in the country, together with a freeze on international assistance, had hampered investments necessary for social stability, equality and security, which were often limited to emergency situations.

24. Despite such difficulties, the Haitian authorities spared no effort in implementing the recommendations of the World Summit for Social Development and the Johannesburg Summit, with the cooperation of national and international partners who had been won over to the need to improve the living conditions of the Haitian population.

25. In the framework of its literacy programme, the Government helped vulnerable families cope with the start of the school year; the President had launched an extensive national literacy programme ("Alpha-économique"); literacy centres had been established in national and State institutions; and an intensive campaign was under way to raise awareness of the importance of combating illiteracy.

26. The Ministry of the Environment, in cooperation with the State Literacy Department, had launched the "Alpha-environnement" programme, based on the previous literacy programme, which aimed to provide the population with the education it needed to improve its living conditions.

27. The Ministry on the Status of Women, for its part, had organized a seminar on the integration of a gender perspective in policies, in order to pave the way for a more just and equal society for sustainable human development.

28. The Government was also making considerable efforts to combat the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/

AIDS), including through a sectoral strategic plan for raising youth awareness, which had been developed by the Ministry for National Education and launched on 4 October 2002 to mark the national HIV/AIDS awareness day.

29. The Haitian Government was in the process of promoting budgetary reforms for social development, and had established a mechanism for combating fiscal fraud and corruption, improving transparency, fairness and efficiency and funding health, security, justice and social infrastructure projects. The State was increasing the number of partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental organizations, in order to strengthen the focus on primary social services.

30. Her delegation wished to reiterate the importance of cooperation to promote the social development of the least developed countries; it hoped that the efforts of the Government of Haiti and the Organization of American States (OAS) to implement OAS resolutions 806 and 822 would lead to a resolution of the conflict currently dividing the country and to a resumption of the international assistance on which social development efforts depended.

31. Despite the wide range of actions undertaken, current difficulties undermined the efforts of the Government, which was nevertheless determined to work towards an improvement of living conditions in Haiti. Action to combat poverty was universal; developed countries had a duty to assist developing countries, since poverty was an insult to humanity.

32. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) associated herself with the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Any social policy must be aimed first and foremost at ensuring that the population lived in dignity, did not suffer from poverty and received the best possible protection against disease. However, certain United Nations reports on social development showed that targets had not been achieved, particularly those set at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen. Globalization, which should be a source of progress, was only serving to widen the gap between developed and developing countries. International cooperation, for its part, remained limited. The opening of markets of countries of the North to goods from the South and measures taken to alleviate the debt of poor countries still left much to be desired. The Syrian Arab Republic, which had made social development a priority, hoped that the commitments made at Monterrey, Johannesburg and Madrid, as well as those made at the special session of the General Assembly on children, would be met. It was prepared to cooperate with non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations to implement any social development programmes.

33. The Syrian Arab Republic had enacted legislative provisions and implemented programmes targeting the family, the nucleus of any society. In the field of poverty eradication, the Government constantly sought to enhance its policies and social and economic programmes to protect all age groups in the most vulnerable sectors. Health care and primary education were free of charge. Wage scales had been reviewed to take account of increased costs of living, and the Government was endeavouring to create the necessary conditions to ensure that all men and women wishing to work could find employment. Specific measures also targeted young people and disabled persons. In addition, an action plan for older people in the Arab world was in the process of being implemented, based on various national plans for protecting older persons.

34. In an environment where the right of peoples to self-determination was not respected and where the fundamental right to life was ignored, it was utopic to talk of "social development". The continued Israeli occupation of Arab territories in the Syrian Arab Republic, Palestine and Lebanon and the continuation by armed Israeli forces of activities contravening international law stood in the way of any social development. The situation in occupied Palestinian territory had become intolerable, as evidenced by the report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the region. The international community must take urgent action to put an end to that humanitarian disaster.

35. **Ms. Rajaonarivelo** (Madagascar) said that, during the Millennium Summit, the heads of State and Government had acknowledged their individual and joint responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity. Her delegation welcomed the General Assembly's decision to devote two plenary meetings of its fifty-seventh session to the results and follow-up of the International Year of Volunteers. The meetings had taken place on 5 December 2002, International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development. The international community should, as a matter of priority, ensure that globalization benefited

everyone, and it was vital for all nations to prioritize the promotion of social development.

36. She urged Member States to support the Youth Employment Network established by the Secretary-General, and to introduce concrete measures to implement the recommendations made by the 12-member panel set up to guide the Network. In that connection, Madagascar supported the draft resolution submitted by Senegal concerning the promotion of youth employment.

37. Her delegation welcomed the plans to draft a comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, and would lend its full support to the Convention.

38. Her country ensured that gender issues were taken into account in all development programmes (girls' access to education and female literacy for adult women and older women in urban and rural areas). It welcomed the report by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the Plan of Action of the United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (A/57/218), and the application of resolution 56/116, in which the General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Literacy Decade for the period 2003-2012. In terms of concrete steps, Madagascar had implemented measures that included providing free access to public primary education, supplying teaching materials, training teachers and building 200 schools.

39. Madagascar's poverty alleviation programme was partly focused on raising awareness about the situation of older people, and on strengthening the role of the family in society. It was the international community's responsibility to assist Governments in identifying issues that directly concerned families with a view to observing the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. As most of the country's population was rural, particular importance was attached to the family in rural areas, and her country had undertaken to improve living conditions in rural areas by introducing a rural electrification and drinking-water programme. To carry out such an ambitious programme however, it needed to set up partnerships with the private sector, and to obtain financial support in the framework of bilateral, multilateral and regional cooperation.

40. She hoped that all the new measures and approaches to encourage development which had been adopted at major international conferences over the last two years would result in the implementation of concrete measures, and that the commitments undertaken would be fulfilled so that worldwide social development did not remain an abstract concept.

41. **Ms. Elisha** (Benin), speaking on behalf of the West African States, said that 13 of the subregions' 16 countries were in the category of least developed countries. That showed that it was vital to give special attention to that part of the world

42. She noted the main millennium development goals — poverty eradication, education, gender equality, maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS control, environmental sustainability and forging partnerships for social development — and said it was now time to implement them. The African leaders, who had understood the need for Africa to take responsibility for itself, had set up the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

43. A number of obstacles to development remained, and although some progress had been made, it was too slow or even, in some countries, non-existent. The West Africa subregion, for example, was beset by wars and internal disputes; to stop armed conflict and encourage development a few basic requirements had to be met. Firstly, development assistance should no longer be tied to conditions; it should constitute an act of generosity which included debt- and debt-service cancellation, and effective access to the promised 0.7 per cent of developed countries' gross national products. Structural adjustment reforms and poverty-reduction strategies should also be adapted to take account of the social development goals of the Millennium Summit and of NEPAD.

44. The situation of young people was a reflection of that of West African societies as a whole, and underemployment was one of the most challenging problems. Given that 70 per cent of the labour force worked in agriculture, the growth rate of production and investment in that sector was of the utmost importance. However, the processing of local products should also be emphasized in order to promote integrated and sustainable development.

45. A deterioration in the economic and social situation inevitably brought with it a decline in the situation of older people and people with disabilities. The region's countries were committed to providing older people with decent living conditions, thereby

protecting and strengthening the family, which was the basic unit of society and a bulwark against a host of problems, including globalization.

46. With reference to General Assembly resolution 56/113 on preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, she commended the efforts made by various countries, and encouraged those that had not yet made any arrangements to organize activities to mark such an important event.

47. **Mr. Mejdoub** (Tunisia), addressing agenda items 98 and 99, noted that the social goals embodied in the Millennium Declaration testified to a determination to make the right to development a tangible reality, but that the responsibility for development must be shared, falling as much to individual States as to the international community as a whole.

48. Tunisia advocated a strengthening of international cooperation for social development, as well as the sharing of experience and dissemination of best practices, with respect for cultural identity and for freely chosen models of development.

49. The integrated approach adopted by Tunisia guaranteed complementarity between the economic and social pillars of development. Fifty per cent of the State budget was devoted to the social sectors (education, public health, youth, the family, housing). The country had also embarked on a qualitative reform of the social welfare system, especially to benefit older persons. The promulgation of Act No. 94-114 on protection of the rights of older persons had represented a milestone in the social sector. The Act was aimed at strengthening the family and family care for older people, enhancing institutional assistance and providing the health services needed by older persons, while giving greater prominence to their role.

50. Convinced that social progress was dependent on eradicating poverty, exclusion and marginalization, Tunisia advocated a united approach towards combating such phenomena; accordingly, it welcomed the decision to establish a World Solidarity Fund. As the African continent was suffering from lack of progress in the social field , he welcomed the creation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which provided a suitable framework for a new form of partnership for sustainable development.

51. His delegation was seriously concerned at the economic, social and humanitarian plight of the Palestinian people. It was the international community's duty to put an end to Israeli practices and to encourage the occupying Power, Israel, to comply with international law and international humanitarian law, including Security Council resolutions and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Convention).

52. **Mr. Vienravi** (Thailand) said that since the Copenhagen Summit in 1995, Thailand had not wavered in its commitment to social development, particularly in the three core areas of poverty eradication, employment and social integration. The ninth national economic and social development plan for the period 2002-2006 mapped out the strategy adopted by Thailand in that area.

53. Wishing to ensure quality of life for the population, the Government of Thailand accorded top priority in its national programme of action to human development and poverty eradication. The Prime Minister himself chaired the National Committee on Poverty Eradication, and a number of social reforms — in tandem with anti-corruption efforts — were aimed at enhancing the efficiency of governmental efforts. In that connection, he drew attention to the recent establishment of a Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, which represented the culmination of the Government's efforts to establish a comprehensive social welfare system.

54. The second pillar was education. The new Constitution and National Education Act provided for education for all, and educational reform was already under way. In that connection, Thailand supported the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012) and the relevant plan of action prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

55. The third pillar involved solidarity, which was a prerequisite for the survival of any society. Aware of the particular vulnerability of many population groups (children, young people, women, older persons, persons with disabilities), Thailand was determined to defend their rights. In respect of older persons and disabled persons, it was committed to implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing adopted in April 2002 at the outcome of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, and contributed to the

United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing. At the national level, the Government had proclaimed 2002 Year of Employment Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities. Moreover, Thailand was cooperating with Japan to establish an Asia-Pacific Development Centre on Disability in Bangkok in 2004. As the host country for the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Thailand stood ready to cooperate with the United Nations for commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

56. **Mr. Félix** (Dominican Republic), addressing agenda item 98, said that his Government had always attached great importance to social development. It saw itself as a Government with a human face, serving its people, and had thus recently established three new important ministries (Ministry for Youth, Ministry for the Environment, Ministry on the Status of Women), to encourage communities to achieve progress and sustainable development through labour, solidarity and joint creation of collective wealth.

57. The Ministry for Youth, whose establishment had been supported by international and non-governmental organizations, sought to ensure that young people, who accounted for a large part of the Dominican population, played an active role in important social and educational programmes.

58. Concerned to protect its population against a number of risks associated with old age, disability, disease and work, the Dominican Republic had also promulgated Act No. 87-01 on the establishment of a social welfare system.

59. The Ministry on the Status of Women, established in 2000, sought to encourage the various political bodies to take measures to improve the status of women, both as citizens and as bearers of inalienable rights. The Government had also established an office for gender equality and development within each ministry. In the same vein, it had established a Social Cabinet comprising all State institutions implementing policies for the protection of children and the family, which was the keystone of Dominican society. There was also a "social contract" allowing disadvantaged mothers to benefit from financial assistance provided they had their children vaccinated.

60. The Dominican Republic had shown great interest in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. Concerned not to exclude any citizen, it would ensure that all the recommendations made in that area were implemented. In that regard, he welcomed the efforts made by the Committee's Chairman to promote a regional conference of experts to be held in Quito on that theme in 2003, and he urged United Nations bodies to offer their support to the project.

61. **Ms. Molaroni** (San Marino), referring to agenda items 98 and 99, said that in the past older people had truly been treated with respect. That was no longer the case even though their number would continue to grow because of the increase in life expectancy and the decline in fertility, reaching 2 billion in 2050, when one person in five would be over 60 years old as compared to one in ten currently.

62. The Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid in April 2002, had adopted a Political Declaration and Plan of Action that took due account of that phenomenon. In its 117 recommendations, the Plan of Action touched on the three main areas of the problem: development, health and well-being, which were necessary conditions for optimizing older people's contribution to society.

63. Her Government was prepared to cooperate with all concerned stakeholders — national authorities, civil society, the private sector, professional organizations, unions, cooperatives, research, academic and other educational and religious institutions and the media — in implementing the International Plan of Action on Ageing so that older persons would no longer face discrimination and would find their place in society.

64. She stressed the need to encourage intergenerational interaction. Families played a crucial role in the upbringing of children and, as the Minister of Education of San Marino had stated at the General Assembly special session on children, children needed the presence eof adults, above all their parents, in order to grow in harmony. It was therefore essential to create conditions that enabled parents to fulfil their educational role.

65. That was even more important in the developing countries, where the family must be at the centre of efforts to eradicate chronic poverty, which was the biggest obstacle to meeting the basic needs of children, and to protect and promote the rights of children. In the industrialized countries as well, the family must be the

starting point for efforts to break the vicious circle of aggression, violence and abuse, which were unacceptable violations of children's rights.

66. **Mr. Lamba** (Malawi), having associated himself with the statements made on 4 October 2002 by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and on 3 October 2002 by the representative of Botswana on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that his Government continued to implement the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and the Programme of Action adopted at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. Poverty eradication, promotion of productive employment and social development remained critical issues. Policies were being implemented to check the increase in inequalities and balance the need for macroeconomic reforms with the need to ensure the well-being of the population. However, poverty, caused by limited access to land, poor education and health, limited off-farm employment and lack of access to credit, remained a scourge on the country. Increased official development assistance (ODA) would provide the resources necessary to promote development.

67. Malawi welcomed the political declaration and International Plan of Action adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid, and was in the process of developing a national policy in that area.

68. It was also determined to improve the plight of persons with disabilities, guided by the Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. It had established institutionalized structures to respond to the needs and concerns of persons with disabilities and was reviewing its legislation with a view to enhancing their right to employment, appropriate remuneration and protection under the law. It therefore applauded the decision by the Commission for Social Development to extend the work of the Special Rapporteur on Disabilities to the year 2005 and looked forward to the elaboration of a comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

69. Convinced that youth must be partners in development, his Government had made it a priority to encourage young people to participate in all aspects of national development, in particular by encouraging school attendance and ensuring that non-governmental organizations and the media took an interest in young people and contributed to helping them find solutions to basic problems such as HIV/AIDS and unemployment.

70. His Government was committed to improving the well-being of its people and was well aware that much remained to be done in order to achieve the goals set at the Millennium Summit and relevant United Nations global conferences.

71. **Ms. Kusorgbor** (Ghana) associated herself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. She said that during the previous two decades Ghana and many other African countries had endeavoured unsuccessfully to achieve meaningful social development. In order to remedy that situation, the African countries had created the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which had received the overwhelming support of the international community. As noted in the conclusion of the Secretary-General's report on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/57/115), the core issues of the World Summit had been incorporated in the programmes and outcomes of important United Nations conferences and the millennium development goals. Her delegation was hopeful that the outcome documents of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit for Sustainable Development would serve as blueprints for international cooperation efforts to eradicate poverty, promote productive employment and enhance social integration for the purpose of achieving equitable and sustainable development.

72. Her Government was pursuing a poverty reduction strategy that included measures to monitor and evaluate expenditures, outputs and activities to support growth and poverty reduction. Mechanisms had also been put in place to identify the impact on society of the policies being pursued.

73. There was a direct correlation between a country's literacy rate and its level of development, proving the importance of education. Accordingly, in 1996 the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) programme had been introduced in Ghana. It was currently under review by the Government, which

would incorporate its results into future education policies.

74. Ghana's poverty reduction strategy focused on fundamental issues such as inequalities in access to services, shortfalls in spending, management gaps, particularly in connection with the deployment and supervision of teachers, retention of qualified personnel and coordination of donor support for educational programmes and projects. In addition, the strategy emphasized the development of basic education, early childhood development programmes and alternative education for children out of school, especially in remote areas. Special attention was devoted to girls' education; a national girls' education unit had been established in order to promote their retention at the secondary and tertiary levels of the educational system. In dealing with illiteracy and unemployment, labour market factors must be taken into account; technical and vocational education and training, special skills acquisition programmes and tertiary education would be developed.

75. While every effort must be made to promote children's education, it was equally important to place all available human resources in the service of national development. The current unprecedented demographic transformation was reflected in the Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid in April 2002; her delegation welcomed the ongoing initiatives to implement the Plan of Action adopted at the Assembly and looked forward to the outcome of the interregional consultations on approaches to implementation of the Plan which were scheduled for early 2003.

76. It was also essential to fulfil the commitments made by the States parties to various international agreements on trade (the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Doha), financing for development (the Monterrey Conference) and sustainable development (the Johannesburg Summit). Bilateral and regional initiatives such as the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, the European Union's "Everything but arms" initiative and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) could strengthen partnerships for development. Those initiatives, coupled with a revitalization of concessional loans and external debt relief such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, could ensure the stabilization necessary to equitable economic and social development for all.

77. **Mr. Maquieira** (Chile), speaking on agenda item 98, said that he shared the views on the world social situation expressed by the representatives of the Group of 77 and China, the Rio Group and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR); his Government attached particular importance to the issue of disabled persons. It had not only implemented policies in that area; it had also sought to achieve genuine integration for disabled persons and to guarantee each individual the same opportunity for participation. According to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, between 7.5 per cent and 10 per cent of the population of developing countries suffered from some degree of disability; in Chile, that amounted to 1.4 million disabled persons.

78. During the past decade, his Government had changed its approach from that of providing direct care for disabled persons to one of allocating resources to organizations of civil society in order to promote the integration of such persons for the benefit of all. His Government had also worked to bring about cultural change by facilitating disabled persons' participation as subjects of law.

79. The National Fund for Disabled Persons, established in 1994 with a mandate to promote their social integration and equality of opportunity, had achieved concrete results in a number of areas. In 2002, 130 projects on prevention, rehabilitation, employment accessibility, education, culture and recreation had been implemented throughout the country. Civil society had played a very important role in all those efforts; however, there were still important challenges such as strengthening the linkages between the State and civil society.

80. Disabled persons had the same rights, needs and dreams as others, but not always the same opportunities. It was incumbent on individual States and on the international community as a whole to address that problem. To work on behalf of disabled persons was to work for a world where diversity, pluralism, tolerance, integration and human rights were more than just words.

81. His delegation attached great importance to the process begun at Durban and to the decision to elaborate an international convention on protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities as an early stage of a process that should lead to the development of norms applicable to some

600 million people throughout the world, 80 per cent of them in developing countries. The adoption of a binding international convention covering the political, cultural, economic, and social dimensions would complement existing human rights instruments. Such a convention should combine general principles, specific rights and social development initiatives; States should provide funding for its implementation with assistance from the international community.

82. **Ms. Jarbussynova** (Kazakhstan), speaking on agenda item 97, commended the work of the Commission on Social Development, of which Kazakhstan was a member, and expressed support for the decisions taken at its fortieth session. The interdependence between social and economic policies made it necessary to broaden the scope of macroeconomic policy in the interests of integration. Her Government therefore welcomed the activities of the relevant United Nations funds, programmes, organizations and specialized agencies and the assistance and cooperation that donor States provided to the developing and, in particular, the least developed countries and countries with economies in transition, in the area of economic development; their integration into the global economy was a prerequisite for social development.

83. Kazakhstan had established priorities consistent with the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and the decisions taken at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. Social protection of its population was one such priority, accounting for 40 per cent of the national budget and currently benefiting 2.5 million people. The system of social protection had been reformed in order to reduce the vulnerability of the least protected and to provide assistance to families, which played a key role in social development and were a factor in social unity. Her Government had also carried out a pension reform, creating both a State and a private system.

84. The plan of action for implementation of her country's poverty reduction programme for 2003-2005 was currently under consideration. Its objectives for 2005 were to reduce the poverty scale by 30.3 per cent as compared with that of 2002, lower the unemployment rate to 8.1 per cent and stabilize social and demographic indicators. At the same time, with valuable assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), her Government was conducting a mid-term poverty reduction programme for 2000-2007.

85. Her delegation was grateful to the United Nations system and its specialized agencies for carrying out programmes and projects in various areas, including that of social development.

86. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda), speaking on agenda item 99, said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The status of older persons throughout the world had worsened since the adoption of the first International Plan of Action on Ageing in Vienna in 1982. That trend, largely attributable to a lack of solidarity between generations, was alarming since ageing was an inevitable process. While it was true that the needs of children and of society as a whole must also be met, it would be a grave mistake to ignore older persons.

87. A number of meetings on the topic of ageing had been held in Africa. It was a familiar theme in Uganda; her Government recognized the increased diversity of society and the breakdown in respect for older persons. The extended family was no longer enough; there was a need for State intervention through social welfare and public health systems. National policies and strategies should also take into account the needs of older persons. Good governance and financial management, legal protection of individuals and of human rights and consultation with stakeholders were other ways of meeting those needs.

88. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda charged the State with taking affirmative action in favour of groups marginalized on the basis of age, disability or any other factor. A national policy and plan of action for older persons were being developed, and Parliament enacted legislation to enable the implementation of policies and programmes aimed at redressing social, economic and other imbalances.

89. In sub-Saharan Africa, poverty, migration to urban areas and the HIV/AIDS pandemic had been disastrous for older persons, in particular women, who bore the brunt of caring for the younger generation. Easily accessible health care must be made available, providers must be trained to adequately address the needs of older persons and income generating and microcredit schemes must be put in place.

90. The wisdom of older persons should be guarded jealously by the young. The world population aged 60 and over had tripled since 1950, and that of Africa was expected to increase sixfold during the next 50 years. Attitudes, policies and practices must change so that older persons could live in dignity and pass on their knowledge.

91. **Mr. Yagob** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that development constituted a major challenge for the international community. Without equitable economic and social development, it would be impossible to achieve sustainable peace throughout the world and to eradicate poverty. Progress to date was merely a drop of prosperity in an ocean of poverty. Rapid globalization, which was widening the gap between rich countries and developing ones, magnified the problems faced by nations in their efforts to achieve their goals.

92. The documents produced at United Nations international conferences and the Millennium Declaration were an excellent point of departure for the development of specific measures to promote all the complementary aspects of sustainable development, which must be viewed as a whole. However, that could be achieved only in a world freed of constant fear and threats, where human rights, the rules of international law and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations were respected by all countries, whatever their size.

93. Poverty remained a major obstacle to development, yet its eradication was among the primary objectives established at the Copenhagen Summit. It was therefore necessary to increase assistance to the developing and, in particular, the least developed countries, the majority of which were located in Africa. The developed countries should provide them with official development assistance (ODA) worthy of the name in accordance with the commitments that they had made in that area.

94. There had been little improvement in the social situation in Africa since the Copenhagen Summit; it was therefore necessary to create a climate conducive to improving Africa's integration into the global economy. To that end, priority must be given to relieving the debt burden of African countries; setting fair, guaranteed commodity prices; removing barriers to the export of African products to the developed countries; and, in the social sphere, raising literacy levels, increasing the number of programmes for young people and combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

95. His Government was implementing development plans and had already established new infrastructures in the areas of health, education and industry and improved public access to drinking water. It had also set up an effective social welfare scheme, particularly for disabled and older persons.

96. It was important that the objectives of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, adopted in Madrid, be achieved. They reflected the importance accorded older persons by the international community, a sentiment fully shared in the Muslim world. Older people played an essential role as a bridge between generations. Her Government had therefore implemented social and economic projects aimed at preventing their marginalization.

97. The family was the cornerstone and very heart of society, unique in its ability to guarantee children a better future. The tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family would therefore be commemorated with great ceremony in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

98. The disabled had the same rights and obligations as other members of the society. Ignoring them would deprive society of precious human resources that could be put to good use in the context of socioeconomic development efforts. A legal instrument must therefore be established to ensure protection of their rights.

99. **Mr. Ivanou** (Belarus) said that the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly had put the issue of social development back on the agenda by reviewing progress made and difficulties encountered and by outlining solutions, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development had emphasized that social development was an integral part of sustainable development. He therefore welcomed the consideration of socioeconomic development by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fortieth session and looked forward to further consideration of that issue at its forty-first session.

100. His Government had begun the twenty-first century by adopting a development strategy based on a market economy and the well-being of its population. To that end it had implemented a socioeconomic programme up to 2015 and a national sustainable development strategy up to 2010 and had adopted an

integrated five-year system of social protection measures inspired by related major conferences.

101. His delegation welcomed the decision to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Disability, who was responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and for the elaboration of a comprehensive and integral international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. At the national level, his Government was endeavouring not only to facilitate rehabilitation programmes for the disabled and improve the quality of care provided to them but also to prevent disabilities. There was no simple solution but international assistance and exchanges of experience would be of inestimable value.

102. The occasion of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family would underscore the importance of the family and programmes and policies to promote the family. His Government's policies in that area were based on fundamental values: equality between men and women, sharing of tasks within the family, best interests of the child, partnership between family and State and protection of the family. Celebration of the annual Family Day provided an opportunity for a series of awareness-raising activities.

103. Statistics on ageing showed that by 2050 the number of older persons in the world would for the first time in history be greater than the number of young people. The worldwide and long-term nature of that phenomenon required the implementation of measures for the long term, such as the strategy defined in Madrid during the Second World Assembly on Ageing. In Belarus, 26 per cent of the population was retired; his Government had implemented a programme to improve pensions and was endeavouring to help older persons adapt to the rapidly changing economic situation while at the same time enjoying greater stability.

104. He noted with interest the Secretary-General's proposal to develop a 10-year international plan of action for literacy.

105. He welcomed the participation of young people in the work of the Third Committee because it helped delegates better understand their problems and helped young people better understand the processes in which they were being asked to participate. He also found the Secretary-General's proposal on the establishment of a Youth Employment Network to promote youth employment an interesting one.

106. Social development had three key components: poverty eradication, creation of productive employment and greater social integration. Those goals had to be met in order for everyone to live in a decent world.

107. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan) associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

108. Social development was one of the four cardinal principles underlying the Charter of the United Nations, the other three being peace, human rights and international justice. Social development was incompatible with discrimination on the basis of religion, race, ethnic origin or culture or with intolerance, hate or xenophobia. Although rooted in equality, social justice and the widest possible participation, it could not exist without good governance in the public sphere. His Government understood that and had implemented programmes for sustainable development, rationalized its economic policy and empowered women, for whom 33 per cent of the seats in Parliament were reserved. Pakistan had been the first country to set up a Human Development Fund and a National Volunteer Corps to alleviate poverty and promote human development. Child labour had been virtually eliminated and the human rights situation in general had improved. The general elections for the national and provincial assemblies to be held on 10 October would complete the process of restoring participatory democracy.

109. Peace and security were also prerequisites for social development. South Asia, where one fifth of humanity lived, was torn by various conflicts. That was one of the main reasons why the region lagged far behind in development. That vicious circle of misery could be brought to an end only if the countries involved in the conflicts showed a real political will to resolve their differences through dialogue.

110. Developed and developing countries must work together to realize their common goals: democracy, employment, sharing of technology and protection of the environment. The special session of the General Assembly to review the World Summit for Social Development had acknowledged the interdependence between economic and social development, yet the international trade regime was not an equitable one, the developing countries were being crushed by the burden

of their debt to the rich countries and official development assistance was dwindling. In order to remedy that situation, the commitments made at Copenhagen, the Millennium Summit, Monterrey and Johannesburg must be fulfilled in an integrated and coherent manner.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.